

arthritis of the mind

from that first parental admonition  
security stalks  
I was 18 & living alone  
my sister saw my confusion  
she suggested I enlist  
according to her  
they would train me to be a photographer  
I was trained to be in the security police  
3 years of it  
with a secret clearance  
the logical move after discharge  
was to become a state trooper  
my father pushed civil service  
that's what he would've done  
if he had another chance  
I passed the test  
& became a mail carrier for about 3 days  
the supervisor laughed when I quit  
where else would I make that kind of money?  
my father told me to come to New York  
with all the skyjacking going on  
the government was creating a new occupation  
sky marshall  
I passed the test but didn't follow up  
just as well since it went the way of the Edsel  
the T was looking for busdrivers  
I passed the test  
& drove bus for a year before quitting  
they practically pleaded with me to stay  
it was the military all over again  
instead of promising that 4th stripe  
it was the guarantee of becoming a fulltimer  
security is an illusion  
any insurance man knows that

heavy

I found myself in northern Italy  
surrounded by little towns  
from A Farewell To Arms  
& Nick Adams stories  
in my late teens  
just as the author had been  
it was too much  
I made Pamploma  
saw the great Antonete & El Cordobes  
drank at Harry's Bar in Venice



daiquiris of course  
for three years I slept in barracks  
that had been occupied by Nazi officers  
did guard duty in their towers  
surrounded by barbed wire  
20 years after their defeat  
a Jew in their quarters  
it was too much  
my head was swimming with all this shit  
I decided to buy a typewriter at the BX  
& learn how to write

on leave

I was tanned & fit  
Melvin was on the way out  
he was 25  
my mother had taken him in  
when he was 16  
now cirrhosis was taking over  
he died just before I left for NY  
I had one week left  
since my plane to Italy left from NY  
I decided to see my father  
for the first time in 3 years  
meet his new wife  
they took me to Toots Shors  
Radio City  
where I saw Johnny Carson taping his show  
my last night  
they took me to see Streisand live  
in Funny Girl  
there was a young woman sitting next to me  
who offered me some of her candy  
she was alone & play hopping  
my father kept nudging me to go with her  
he thought she was some celebrities' daughter  
I never asked  
it was probably the best visit with him  
I ever had

survival technique

never let your mind kick you  
in the butt